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# The Tennessee Press

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## INSIDE

**Guest column: Newspapers - a keystone species**

Page 2

**Daniels: Painting by, and with, the numbers**

Page 3

**Tracks**

Page 3

**Foust: Meet the non-super super salesperson**

Page 4

**26 years of Eyes on LaFollette photojournalism**

Page 5

**Showcase: Sheriff's ties to contractor raise questions**

Page 6

**Sheriff Bart: How to dig in on meeting coverage**

Page 8

**Obituaries**

Page 11

## P-I puts building up for sale, seeks smaller office space

**SUBMITTED**  
**The Paris Post-Intelligencer**  
**October 4, 2019**

Don't worry, The Post-Intelligencer plans to continue cranking out daily newspapers for at least another 153 years.

But it may well do so from another location in or near Paris.

The descendants of the late Bryant and Julia Williams, who own the 153-year-old newspaper and its popular website, have put the building up for sale.

"Since we began having The P-I printed in Murray three years ago, it's become more and more obvious that we no longer need 12,000 square feet of office space to get the job done," P-I Editor and Publisher Michael Williams said.

"We no longer need room for a 67-foot-long press, 20 tons of newsprint, several barrels of ink, a large computer-to-plate machine and a massive darkroom," he said.

"We have 6,000 square feet on each of two floors, and could fit our



Photo by Sarah Williams,  
The Paris Post-Intelligencer

In this front-page photo cropped from The Paris Post-Intelligencer, P-I employees paying homage to their building now up for sale are (l. to r.) Shelby Frye, Tim Forrest, Daniel Williams, Gay Francisco, Tiffany Powell, Nina Cotton, Lana Clifton, Evonne Williams, Katie Williams, Michael Williams, Glenn Tanner, Bill McCutcheon, Ken Walker and Alex Katzmarek.

business in 4,000 to 6,000 square feet easily."

And that includes room for its insertion and mailing operation once the printed newspapers are brought back to Paris about 1 a.m. each weekday.

This wouldn't be the first time

The P-I has moved.

When the late W. Percy Williams bought the newspaper in 1927, it was located on the west side of the court square next to what is now Stella Nera restaurant.

Ten years later, it moved to the rented building at the corner of

Poplar and Blythe streets now occupied by the law offices of Greer, Greer and Whitfield.

It was the first occupant of that building, which was erected by John Kane Currier Jr. for attorney

See **PARIS P-I** Page 2

## Tennessee high court to decide newspaper defamation case

**TRAVIS LOLLER**  
**Associated Press**  
**October 4, 2019**

The Tennessee Supreme Court heard arguments Thursday, Oct. 3, in a case that weighs the public's right to know against the right of individuals not to be defamed.

The case concerns Jeffery Burke, who was accused in 2013 of stealing money from a White County football team's cookie dough fundraiser. A reporter at the Sparta newspaper, The Expositor, wrote about the case after interviewing the investigating officer, but some of that information later turned out to be incorrect.

Burke sued the paper, which claims the story falls under

Tennessee's fair report privilege, a law that shields reporters from defamation suits when they report fairly and accurately on an official action or proceeding.

### Case calls role of public information officers into question

In court Thursday, Burke's attorney, Edmund Sauer, argued that the reporter's one-on-one interview with the detective, who is also the sheriff department's public information officer, does not qualify as an official action or proceeding.

Justice Holly Kirby questioned whether it was practical in a small

town that might have only one newspaper to ask public information officers to hold news conferences or send out releases every time they want to get information to the public.

But Sauer argued that even if the detective had held a press conference, much of the information reported would not have been protected by the fair report privilege. In his view, the only protected information is what is already publicly available, such as Burke's arrest and the charge.

Sauer argued that Burke had not yet had a chance to defend himself in court when the story was published.

"In this particular context, lim-

iting the privilege to public facts is extremely important," Sauer argued, noting that stories might be available on the internet for decades.

Representing the newspaper, Phil Kirkpatrick argued that the fair report privilege should apply to statements made by a public information officer and a formal statement made to the press in a private setting should qualify as an official action.

But Justice Roger Page noted a Tennessee Supreme Court ruling earlier this year that expanded protections for reporters hinges on the determination that a report is

See **DEFAMATION** Page 2

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TPAers with suggestions, questions or comments about items in The Tennessee Press are welcome to contact the managing editor. Call Mike Towle, (615) 293-5771; send a note to 118 East Kingwood Drive, Suite F16, Murfreesboro, TN 37130, or email editor@tnpress.com. The deadline for the January 2020 issue is Tuesday, December 3.

# Newspapers: A keystone species

*Editor's note: Laurie Ezzell-Brown is president of the Texas Press Association, and this column is reprinted with her permission. It originally appeared in the September issue of The Texas Messenger.*

Nearly a century ago, the gray wolves were eliminated from Yellowstone National Park — the result of the federal government's early failure to provide for their protection from the human predators that the newly-established national park attracted, and of government-subsidized predator control programs that later sped their demise.

The last wolves were reported killed in 1926. Sporadic reports of wolf sightings followed, but their numbers were no longer sustainable.

The unanticipated result of eradication, though, was a domino effect. Safe from their main predator, the elk population thrived. In growing number, they dined sumptuously on native willows and other plants that grew along stream banks. The vegetation eventually disappeared, as did the beaver and their dams. As the dams vanished, so did the wetlands, and



GUEST  
COLUMN

LAURIE EZZELL-BROWN

the songbirds and waterfowl that inhabited them.

A keystone species is one that has a disproportionately large effect on its natural environment, relative to its abundance, according to Wikipedia.

In Yellowstone, the wolf was a keystone species. It played a crucial role in the park's ecosystem, keeping other populations in check. In its absence, the entire structure of the community was dangerously out of balance.

Today, the free and independent press — long the trusted watchdog of local and state government — is slowly vanishing from the American landscape. Newspaper readership and circulation has been in steady decline for a decade now — plummeting from 62.7 million in 1998, to only about 31 million in

combined print and digital circulation a year ago.

The free-fall of newspaper readership was precipitated by the emergence of online news and social media, and the subsequent crash in advertising revenue. The loss of critical revenue led to budget cuts and staff layoffs. As content was slashed, readership declined.

The demographic changed. A generation of loyal newspaper readers disappeared. A new generation demanded free news and 24-hour updates. While the sheer volume of news grew, the vital connection between reader and reporter, the trusted relationship between news and the community it served, eroded.

With the increasing vulnerability of local newspapers, corporations and venture capitalists pounced, acquiring local news outlets to reap short-term profits. They slashed operating costs, decimated newsrooms, and abandoned the picked-over carcasses.

Newspapers began to disappear

See **KEYSTONE** Page 12

#### PARIS P-I from Page 1

ney Fisher Neal on land formerly occupied by the H.D. Timmons boarding house.

The P-I's current building at 208 E. Wood St. was completed by Frank Barrett in 1949, with the move taking place over the Fourth of July weekend.

"Dad and Granddad told me it was like a parade, with an army of people moving the press and walking every dolly and cart full

of desks, filing cabinets and all the other pieces of equipment to the new building and getting everything set up and arranged in time to produce Monday afternoon's paper," Williams said.

"Looking back, that just doesn't seem possible to me.

"Instead of employees, friends and family making the next move," he said, "I think we may just hire a moving company."

Commercial real estate broker Mark Johnson of Moody Realty Co.

in Paris is in charge of finding a buyer, as well as finding The P-I a smaller building to occupy.

Anyone with leads on either a buyer or a smaller building is encouraged to contact Johnson by calling 336-3702 or emailing johnsonsllogic@gmail.com.

"But just remember, we'll still be providing you with all the news, pictures, sports, lifestyles, opinions, business, advertisements, television schedules and more that we always have," Williams emphasized.

#### DEFAMATION from Page 1

a fair and accurate account of the proceeding it depicts. Page wondered how a court could determine whether a report was a fair and accurate account of a private phone call if there was no record of what was said.

Chief Justice Jeffrey Bivins noted that even if the court finds the fair report privilege does not apply in this case, it does not mean the reporter is guilty of defamation and the reporter could be protected by other defenses.

#### Newspapers, advocates rally support

In arguing for a more expansive view of the fair report privilege, Kirkpatrick was joined by The Associated Press and several other news organizations that filed a friend-of-the-court brief in the case. In that brief, attorneys argue that if reporters cannot rely on law enforcement officers for information, it will have a chilling effect on reporting about crime, a topic of high public interest.

Speaking in an interview after

the oral arguments, Deborah Fisher, the executive director of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government, said it would open up a can of worms if reporters talking to a public information officer were covered by the privilege during a press conference but not during a phone call.

"Bottom line: Reporters need to feel like it's safe to quote the local government PIO," she said.

*This story was reprinted with permission from the Associated Press.*

# Painting with numbers shows how crucial you are

I applaud each and all of you! Everyone that is reading this has a vital role in your newspaper. Whether you work in business or the sales department, or in the news and editorial departments, every member of the newspaper's team is making a difference!

I have worked on the business side of several newspapers – running a research department (remember when we had those!), managing a classified advertising department, developing and running websites, teaching sales teams about digital readers and platforms and how to sell advertising to them.

When I was immersed in the research department, I realized the power of numbers, and how you can use data to paint detailed, and fantastic, pictures. When I represent the Tennessee Press Association to business and political leaders, making sales pitches and lobbying elected offi-



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CAROL DANIELS

cial, I use numbers to illustrate the power of newspapers.

As an industry, we continually have to work with government officials to convince them to keep records open and preserve government commitment to public notice of their plans and activities. The public has a right to know, and government has an obligation to make sure members of our communities, our readers, are aware of the access they have.

Numbers, our numbers, play a significant role in how I talk about newspapers as the best way to inform. A few examples: TPA member newspapers deliver more than 4 million print copies each

week; TPA member newspapers deliver more than 95 million page views each month; and, one of my favorites, TPA members are, collectively, one of the largest employers in the state.

Just the other day, I was working on an advertising proposal that covers 72 counties in Tennessee, and it struck me how GREAT our story is. TPA members deliver into 70 percent of the households across these counties – and that is strictly what we deliver in print! As of this writing, I'm still working on the digital penetration that will only ADD to the great story.

The spreadsheet I sent out to members last month listing all of the public notice requirements for newspapers has started some very good conversations. I want to remind you, please, to reach out to your local legislative representatives to engage them before the session begins in January. It is a lot easier for us

to engage them in a conversation about legislative issues when you have a relationship.

One suggestion I received that I encourage you to embrace – make sure your representatives know you are a local business, employing local citizens, paying local taxes, and those employees are providing a very needed service to the community they serve and represent. The goal is to ensure when they are in Nashville voting on an open record bill or a public notice bill, they are connecting that vote to YOUR publication, and are thinking about the impact on YOUR business.

I wish each of you a lovely Thanksgiving holiday. Be safe and enjoy the season!

Carol

*Carol Daniels is the executive director of the Tennessee Press Association.*

## TRACKS

### Greene named Citizen Tribune SE

Longtime East Tennessee sports writer Adam Greene has been named sports editor of the Citizen Tribune.

Greene replaces Matt Daniels, who recently announced his departure from the Tribune to pursue a career in real estate.

Greene will be a familiar name to area sports fans as he has



Greene

written as a correspondent for the Tribune for 10 years after working in the sports department in 2005 and 2006.

He's worked with area publications such as the Mountain Press and as a freelancer for newspapers and internet websites.

"We're excited to have Adam come aboard in this capacity," Tribune Managing Editor John Gullion said. "Sports is such a big part of what we do here at the Citizen Tribune, and Adam has been a key member of that sports

team as a correspondent for a long time.

"Adam's enthusiasm for the position has been something to see. His genuine excitement tackling this new challenge has been invigorating to watch.

"We're lucky to be able to bring someone in with his talent and local knowledge here at the start of football season.

"And that local knowledge is important when you're following in the footsteps of someone like Matt Daniels. Matt has been an institution here at the Tribune, and his passion for local sports was second to none."

Greene said his enthusiasm comes from a sense of appreciation for covering sports.

"It's legitimately fun," he said. "It's a job that you do, but it's one of those you can't believe you get paid to do it. It's a job that when you tell people you do it, everybody's jealous."

Greene, a photographer and a writer, said one of the great joys of the job is building relationships with people you cover and getting to tell their stories.

"It's fun to get to know kids, college kids and high school kids.

It's fun to deal with the coaches, the fans and the sports information people," he said. "It's hard to have a bad day covering a sport."

Greene is a Morristown native and a 1992 graduate of East High. He attended Carson-Newman and graduated from Union Institute University.

Greene said he is excited to continue working with the Tribune sports team.

"These are friends of mine," Greene said. "These are people that were a pleasure to see out in the field, even when I wasn't working for the Tribune."

Greene has two children, Taylor is at his final year in grad school at DePaul in Chicago, and Emma is about to graduate high school and hopes to be a vet tech.

"She loves animals, too much," Greene said. "We've got too many animals in the house."

*Citizen Tribune, Morristown Sept. 1, 2019*

### Plain Talk welcomes new staff writer

A new staff writer recently joined the Newport Plain Talk.



Lieser

Gem Lieser started her new fulltime position in September, and she is looking forward to covering events and sharing information with the people of Newport and Cocke County.

Lieser has a newspaper background that will serve her well as she begins her new career with the Plain Talk.

"In June of 2015, I moved here with my husband and two sons from a small town in western Maryland," Lieser said.

"I was a reporter at my old hometown's weekly paper and enjoyed every minute of sharing news, events and stories from our area. I am very much looking forward to doing the same here."

Lieser urges community members to reach out with story ideas. She has already served the community in many ways as she is currently guiding the efforts to build an Isaiah 117 House in Cocke County.

*Newport Plain Talk Sept. 12, 2019*

## FOR YOUR CALENDAR

### NOVEMBER

Oct. 31 - Nov. 3: College Media Association Fall National College Media Convention 2019, in conjunction with Associated Collegiate Press, Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, D.C.

Nov. 15 - Covering Substance Abuse and Recovery Workshop, Ashland, Ky. Contact Al Cross at [across3@email.uky.edu](mailto:across3@email.uky.edu)

### FEBRUARY 2020

12-13: TPA Winter Convention, DoubleTree Nashville Downtown Hotel, Nashville

21: Deadline: UT-TPA State Press Contests

28: Deadline: TPA Ad/Circ Ideas Contest

17-19: 2020 Key Executives Mega-Conference, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, Omni Fort Worth Hotel, Fort Worth, Texas

### MARCH 2020

5-8: 2020 Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Computer-Assisted Reporting (CAR) Conference, New Orleans, La.

11-14: College Media Association Spring National College Media Convention 2020, New York Marriott Marquis, New York City

### APRIL 2020

17-18: Journalism Education Association National Convention, Gaylord Opryland, Nashville

### JUNE 2020

18-21: 2020 Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Annual Conference, Gaylord National, National Harbor, Md.

### OCTOBER 2020

21-25: College Media Association Fall National College Media Convention 2020, in conjunction with Associated Collegiate Press, Atlanta Hyatt Regency, Atlanta, Ga.

### JULY 2021

24-26: 2021 Tennessee • Arkansas • Mississippi Press Associations Tri-State Convention, Memphis

# The super salesperson who wasn't so super, after all

Jim was a super sales person. He was so good that he broke all kinds of records at the publishing company where he worked. He consistently brought in more new business than anyone else on the advertising staff. And his numbers always ranked at the top of the weekly and monthly sales reports.

Karen, Jim's former manager, told me that he was the most disciplined team member they had ever had. "Jim was sell-sell-sell all the time. He came to the office every morning at seven o'clock, so he could leave voicemail messages on his prospects' office phones. Then throughout the day, he followed a routine of prospecting and writing proposed media schedules. Everything he did was geared toward closing the deal, so he could move



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JOHN FOUST

on to the next prospect. If he lost a sale, it didn't slow him down at all. He just brushed it off and kept going.

"Jim generated a lot of revenue, but the picture wasn't as rosy as it sounds," Karen explained. "After he made a sale, he left everything else in the creative department's hands. He was the one who had direct contact with his accounts, but he never developed any kind of strategic guidelines to follow.

The creatives were on their own, because there was nothing specific to help them differentiate Advertiser A from Advertiser B. As a result, a lot of those ads didn't work – and advertisers didn't renew their contracts. That put Jim in a position where he had to prospect and sell even harder to make up the lost revenue. It was constant churn."

After a year or so, Jim left for a job in another industry and Karen started insisting on three steps for her team to incorporate in the sales process.

1. Set realistic expectations. "It all starts here," she said. "If people think that putting just any kind of ad in our paper – or on our web site – will automatically bring new customers, they are wrong. It's

the salesperson's job to establish the right expectations. An ad with a photo, a slogan and a logo will take many repetitions to create brand awareness. But an ad which promotes a timely offer or seasonal sale will be more likely to create immediate results."

2. Get the right kind of information. "Most advertisers know enough to help us put together workable ad campaigns," she said. "We just need to ask the right questions and make the effort to understand their businesses."

The questions should be simple and open-ended. What kind of results did they get from previous campaigns? What worked? What didn't work? How are they different from their competitors? How can people benefit from using

their products and services? That's the kind of information that helps a creative department produce strong ads.

3. Monitor results. "It's common sense to follow up frequently to see how the ads are working," Karen said. "If something needs to change, it's best to find out before contract renewal time."

(c) Copyright 2019 by John Foust. All rights reserved. John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

## NEWS

### Democrat debuts new website

*Editor's note: This article was written by Lebanon Democrat editor and publisher Mike Alexieff, although time elements in the story have been updated. It has also been edited for space:*

Readers have noticed some of the changes we have made over the past several months since our purchase of the Democrat. Some of those changes have brought praise, while others have generated complaints. And we have more coming, which I'll talk about first.

Today (Aug. 29) our new lebanondemocrat.com website debuts.



Alexieff

It is still a work in progress, but it has a cleaner design and will have more functionality than our previous site.

Current subscribers will be getting an email from classifieds@lebanondemocrat giving you temporary credentials and asking you to log in and update your account. We will leave the website and e-edition free for now to give everyone a chance to complete the registration process. After Sept. 9, you will have to be a verified subscriber to access the e-edition and more than three articles per month on the website. There will be an option for nonsubscribers

to access to the site for \$1 a day.

A subscription to the Democrat gives you the newspaper three days a week, including unlimited access to the website, e-edition and, eventually, our archives.

Now to the changes we've already made. Perhaps the one that has generated the most comment was the recent dropping of the arrest reports. Let me explain why I've done that.

I don't believe it's fair and consistent with the foundation of our criminal justice system to publish the names of the people arrested without being certain we will publish the outcome of their cases. Innocent until proven guilty is the concept at the heart of law in the United States. Someone's arrest does not mean they are guilty of the crime for which they were arrested, yet their name is

in the paper and, more importantly, on the internet for essentially all eternity.

Over the past few years I've had several instances where people have asked me to take their name off our website because they are applying for jobs or scholarships or leases. Turns out we published their arrest for DUI or possession of marijuana or shoplifting and the charge was later dropped, reduced or expunged, yet never reported.

Potential employers or landlords do a Google search and up pops an arrest report we published. Yes we have the right to publish the arrests - they are public record - but without the staff resources to track those arrests through the court system, I believe it's irresponsible to do so. Of course, we will still write about arrests for serious crimes, or elected officials and prominent figures who are arrested. If it's a matter of public safety or public concern, it will be reported. We will do stories on crime trends, DUIs, drug arrests, burglaries, assaults, etc.

Eventually, I plan to develop a system where we report on the outcome of all criminal cases in Wilson County. That will take the place of arrest reports.

Another issue that's generated complaints is our inconsistency in getting the Dear Abby column in the paper. Beginning today,

the column will appear on the back page of the A section, right under our new weather graphic. Speaking of which, I hope readers are finding the weather graphic a useful feature. It includes historical data, the forecast, regional temperatures, and river levels, among other things. I'd be interested in hearing your thoughts on this policy. Please email me at malexieff@lebanondemocrat.com.

Lebanon Democrat  
Aug. 29, 2019

### Changes come to Roane County News

*Editor's note: The following was written in September to the readers of the Roane County News, Kingston, by editor Hugh G. Willett. Time elements have been updated:*

Change, like death and taxes, is inevitable.

The newspaper business has, for the past few years, been fully engaged in the process of change. Therefore, it should

not be a surprise to learn that change has come to the Roane County News.

Beginning in October the Roane



Willett

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	ROP:	Networks:
September 2019	\$90,982	\$5,638
Year* as of Sept. 30	\$1,151,158	\$134,362

\* The TPS Fiscal Year runs Dec. 1 through Nov. 30

# New website catalogs 26 years of Eyes on LaFollette photojournalism project

AMY BLAKELY  
University of Tennessee-Knoxville  
September 27, 2019

Each spring, professor Rob Heller from UT's School of Journalism and Electronic Media in the College of Communication and Information takes his advanced photojournalism students to LaFollette, Tennessee. They go there to find and photograph stories in the Campbell County community of 7,000, about 45 miles north of Knoxville.

It's a ritual that has been reaping rewards for Heller, his students, and the public for more than a quarter of a century. Spring 2020 will mark the 27th anniversary of Eyes on LaFollette.

A new website (<https://eyesonlafollette.utk.edu/>) chronicles the history of the project and the amazing body of work it's yielded over the years. A new Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/eyesonlafollette/>) allows students who have participated in the project to connect.

The website was created by two UT employees, both graduate students who took Heller's advanced photojournalism class last spring: Kellie Ward, who works in UT's Office of Communications and Marketing, and Jules Morris, director of marketing and communications for the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences.

Eyes on LaFollette came about as part of the evolution of photojournalism group projects.

Back in the 1980s and early 1990s, "day in the life" events had photographers around the world shooting pictures on the same day to publish simultaneously. As the internet evolved, Heller had his students collaborate with photojournalism students at other universities to produce similar projects.

Then in 1993, Heller and his friend, Larry Smith, retired publisher-editor of the LaFollette Press,



Submitted photo

Advanced photojournalism students Sarah Plemmons and Chelsea Babin take photos during the 2019 Eyes on LaFollette Project.

came up with the idea for Eyes on LaFollette. For Heller's students, the project is an opportunity to experience the terror and exhilaration of producing quality work under deadline pressure; Smith's paper reaps the benefits by showcasing the best photos.

At first, Eyes on LaFollette took place every other year.

"We didn't want to wear out our welcome," Heller said. But in 2003, Heller began taking the 12 to 20 students in his advanced photojournalism class to the small town each spring.

Over the course of the years, Eyes on LaFollette has witnessed "the entire reinvention of photography," Heller said.

In the beginning, the students shot black-and-white film. They'd return to Knoxville and spend hours developing the film and making contact sheets. After several years, they switched to color. Thompson Photo Products in Knox-

ville would open over the weekend to help them develop the film. Now the students shoot digitally.

Each spring, work on Eyes of LaFollette begins weeks before the first photo is shot.

Heller takes his students on a day trip to the small town about a month before the shoot. Hosted by the LaFollette Press, the students hear from local officials such as the mayor and the head of the Chamber of Commerce. They get access to the newspaper website so they can peruse old stories, and they are encouraged to search the internet and make phone calls to ferret out leads and make appointments.

On the appointed weekend, Heller and his students head to LaFollette on a Friday morning. They spend the day shooting and then gather that evening to debrief. They shoot more on Saturday morning and head back to Knoxville in the afternoon.

During the following few days,



Photo by Andy Ashby

In this photo from 1997, Raymond Teague and Robby Gross, members of the Flag and Safety Patrol, begin the school day by raising the flags at West LaFollette Elementary School.

students sift through all of the photos and choose the best 50 or so to be printed in the newspaper. They edit, write short stories and cutlines, and produce a special section for the LaFollette Press.

Heller estimates he's had about 300 students participate in Eyes on LaFollette over the years.

Adam Brimer, now a video producer and coordinator in the UT Office of Information Technology's instructional support and training group, took Heller's class as an undergraduate in 2007.

"One of the biggest things I learned was how to connect with a small community. We were charged with finding our own stories. Rob gave us pointers and suggestions, but it was on us to go out and make the connections," he said. "I also learned that it takes being authentic, honest and extremely patient to find gold."

Even more than all of what he learned in Heller's class, Brimer appreciates getting to know Heller himself.

"He's been a great mentor and friend," Brimer said. "He taught me

what it meant to flesh out a story—to come home to your editors with enough photos to tell the story without even reading the copy. He's also really good at telling you when something doesn't go well."

Morris, one of the students who helped build the website, said she first had Heller as a teacher 23 years ago as an undergraduate. Taking his advanced photojournalism class last spring and working on Eyes of LaFollette as a graduate student was a joy.

"I loved every second of it and wanted to keep it alive through building a website showcasing the years of effort," she said. "Heller's excitement around a good photo is contagious."

For Heller, watching the website take shape and reminiscing about the many students he's taught over the years have been both nostalgic and invigorating.

"I feel like this proud papa," he said. "Every year I think, 'I'm getting too old for this project.' It's taxing. Then I remember it's old hat for me, but it's new for my students."

## NEWS from Page 4

County News started combining the Monday and Wednesday issues. Monday, Sept. 30, was the last Monday edition of the newspaper.

This is a good thing, both for the newspaper and for our subscribers.

There will be improvements to

the Wednesday and Friday editions of the paper. The two issues will be larger and will contain all the news that was previously delivered in three newspapers as well as new features and columns.

The new publishing schedule will lower the cost of printing and delivering three issues per week, which will allow for greater investment in the Wednesday and

Friday editions.

The RCN parent company, Landmark Community Newspapers, publishes 60 newspapers across the country. The reduction in frequency is a common trend in the newspaper industry with many tri-weeklies moving to bi-weekly and bi-weekly papers moving to once per week. Most community newspapers in East Tennessee

publish only one issue per week.

The same staff of award-winning editors, writers and photographers will continue to bring you all the news you have come to expect each week. Our Monday Business section will move to Wednesday.

In addition, the news available on our website at [roanecounty.com](http://roanecounty.com) will be updated more fre-

quently with breaking news and more photos from events happening around the county.

This adjustment to our publishing model will assure Roane County continues to enjoy all the benefits that come from having one of the best community newspapers in Tennessee.

Roane County News, Kingston  
Sept. 9, 2019

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE: The Daily Times, Maryville

## Sheriff's connections to private contractor are cozy, but lawyer says not illegal

WAYLON CUNNINGHAM  
The Daily Times, Maryville  
May 11, 2019

Blount County Sheriff James Berrong says he got a call last year.

On the line was City Tele Coin, a private firm with a contract at the Blount County jail. The company was calling because Berrong's daughter had applied for a job there without his knowledge, the sheriff said, and the firm wanted to know if it could interview her for a position as a sales representative.

"You can, but once she goes to work, she will not get one penny from Blount County government," Berrong recalled saying, explaining to The Daily Times how his daughter became a sales representative for a vendor holding one of his office's most lucrative private contracts.

Now in the midst of a high-stakes bidding process for a new, expanded contract, City Tele Coin has the potential to lose the Blount County Sheriff's Office as a business partner — or make their relationship more profitable than ever.

Since at least last summer, Blount County jail officials have expressed a desire to phase out in-person visitation of inmates in favor of remote video-screen visitations following a nationwide trend toward the practice, which is supposed to be safer and present less of a risk for contraband smuggling.

Since the early 2000s, City Tele Coin — a small, family-owned company based in Bossier City, La. — has held the exclusive right to provide phone services to Blount County jail inmates. The arrangement has been profitable for both parties, as a negotiated cut of all phone bills allows the county to pocket hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.

It's also been beneficial to the sheriff.

City Tele Coin's president and owner, a former Louisiana bingo hall owner named Jerry Juneau, has made \$3,000 in personal contributions to Berrong's political campaigns over the past two election cycles.

Berrong sees nothing wrong with the connections.

"You do business with people for a long time, you get to know them," he said.

As for the ongoing bidding process — which will decide which company will be able to provide video visitation services, as well as the phone calls currently provided by City Tele Coin — Berrong says he is "not a choosing factor." That point is echoed by Blount County Attorney Craig Garrett and by the county's purchasing department.

Still, City Tele Coin could win the bid.

### City Tele Coin in the running

Prospective contractors arrived at the Blount County jail at 10 a.m. April 24 to learn more about the jail's open contract for video visitation services. It would be the only opportunity for bidders to see the jail.

Among the companies represented included Securus, which provides the services at Knox County's jail, as well as GTL, which contracts with Davidson (Nashville) and Shelby (Memphis) counties. City Tele Coin, a relatively small competitor to these larger firms, had no representative present. But they are in the running.

In December, when asked about the status of implementing video visitation services, Deputy Chief Chris Cantrell, the jail's warden, said, "We're looking at moving toward using our phone provider's video visitation," referring to City Tele Coin. Using City Tele Coin, he said, would cut down on confusion for the families of inmates, who would be able to put money in a single account for both phone and video calls.

Cantrell later clarified that jail officials were considering other video visitation providers as well, such as Vendengine, which provides the equipment and services used by the jail's commissary.

Blount County's contract with City Tele Coin grants it a guaranteed monopoly over inmate phone services and automatically is renewed on an annual basis, though sometimes it is renegotiated to adjust the county's cut of the proceeds.

This year, the contract was not automatically renewed. Instead, it was put out to bid as part of the solicitation for video visitation services.



Photo by Daryl Sullivan, The Daily Times, Maryville

Blount County Mayor Ed Mitchell (left) congratulates Sheriff James Berrong during last year's Republican primary.

Part of the reason, Berrong said, is a desire to get "more of a commission from somebody."

The latest negotiation of City Tele Coin's contract, signed by Deputy Chief Jarrod Millsaps in 2017, gives the county a 60 percent share of all billable phone revenue. The commission garnered \$271,732 for the county last year.

Bidding for the contract closed Thursday (May 9).

The official document announcing the bid process, called a Request for Proposals, follows state law that stipulates no officer of Blount County shall participate in the "administration of a contract if a conflict of interest, real or apparent, would be involved."

"If there would be a conflict of interest, that interest hasn't arose at this point," Blount County Purchasing Agent Katie Kerr said, emphasizing that Berrong is not on the selection committee and has not been involved in the process.

If other counties are an example, there may exist other avenues for influence, however.

Virgil Gammon, former deputy chief of the Rutherford County's Sheriff's Office in Murfreesboro, said county purchasing committees typically ask the sheriff or a representative of his office which bidder he or she prefers.

Part of Gammon's responsibilities included reviewing bids for open jail contracts. When City Tele Coin's bid arrived at his desk, it "didn't pass the smell test," he said, because it promised returns that did not seem plausible. And, in a world where some contractors try to influence the process by taking officials to dinner and fly fishing trips — or, in past times, by setting up what are basically private department funds — avoiding questionable relationships with vendors was paramount, Gammon said.

But despite Gammon's attempts, the Rutherford County Sheriff's Office decided to contract with City Tele Coin anyway. Juneau, City Tele Coin's president, in 2013 donated \$1,500 to Rutherford County's sheriff, Robert Arnold. Juneau did not respond to multiple requests for an interview.

Gammon's suspicions grew stronger when he says the company offered pre-paid calling cards to the sheriff's office as a "kind of bonus."

Later, at a fundraiser for the sheriff's reelection campaign, Gammon realized City Tele Coin had provided shrimp and other food for the event. He asked the sheriff's finance director, "Can they do this?"

"Oh, yeah, everything's cool," he says the finance director responded.

Gammon says he lost his job in September 2015 after reporting to authorities that his boss, Sheriff Arnold, was involved in illegal profiting from the jail commissary through a vendor called JailCigs.

Arnold pleaded guilty in January 2017 to wire fraud, honest services fraud and extortion.

The world of jail contractors is small. City Tele Coin's sales representative assigned to the county, Greg Borchers, was married to the sales representative for JailCigs.

Sheriff Berrong's daughter, Caroline Berrong, began working for City Tele Coin as a regional sales representative in July 2018.

The 26-year-old Blount County native previously assisted with her family's business at Lambert Acres Golf Course. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration in 2016 from King University's Knoxville campus. Soon after graduating, she was hired as an affiliate broker at a Maryville real estate office.

Now, as a sales representative for City Tele Coin, she pitches the company's services to Tennessee sheriffs across East and Middle Tennessee.

"People know she's my daughter," Berrong said, adding, however, that he does not facilitate sales meetings. "She's a girl and she does her own job. I don't sell phones."

Caroline Berrong did not return two recent phone calls and a voicemail left by the newspaper.

At the time that City Tele Coin hired his daughter, Sheriff Berrong says he made it clear up front that she could not engage with Blount County as a part of her job, or receive any direct compensation from the county.

"If she were to get a penny, vendors would be changed," Berrong said, adding that he possessed a copy of the contract. It was provided to the newspaper alongside a statement from Blount County's attorney, Garrett.



Caroline Berrong

**SHERIFF** from Page 6

Garrett, who first was made aware of the relationship late last month, wrote that under state law the relationship between Berrong and the company does not constitute a conflict of interest. While state law prohibits officials from being involved in contracts in which they have a direct or indirect interest — extending the notion of interest to include both the spouse of the official or any children living in their household — Berrong's daughter "is a married adult who does not live in Sheriff Berrong's house."

Garrett continued, "In discussing the matter with Sheriff Berrong, it was obvious to both of us that neither Sheriff Berrong or Blount County is receiving any type of gratuity or benefit based on the fact that they have chosen to reach out to Caroline Berrong and offer her a job. The benefit being received in this relationship is by City Tele Coin Company, Inc., in securing an employee whose father has a long-standing career in law enforcement and enjoys a statewide reputation for professionalism and integrity with his peers in the law enforcement community."

Kerr, Blount County's purchasing agent, said Berrong had an informal conversation with the purchasing department about his daughter's employment at the time she was hired. Department personnel did not consider it a conflict of interest, she said.

Berrong is acutely aware of the long shadow that can be cast by even the hint of unethical relationships with private jail partners.

A federal jury in 1990 convicted his predecessor, former Blount County Sheriff Avery Mills, of 18 criminal counts after he accepted \$23,200 over the years in extortion payments from two bail bonding companies. The payments — \$3,700 from the owner of Blount County Bonding Co. and \$19,500 from the owner of East Tennessee Bonding Co. — were considered campaign contributions by the sheriff, his defense attorney argued, according to reporting at the time from The Tennessean in Nashville.

"You can look under every rock. I'm not going to jeopardize a career and a reputation for anything," Berrong said in an interview. "It could be peanuts. I just don't do that."

**Juneau's contributions scrutinized**

The campaign contributions Juneau made to Berrong are part of a larger pattern. Over the years, Juneau has donated tens of thousands of dollars to dozens of political campaigns for Southeast incumbent sheriffs who contract with his company.

His political involvements have been scrutinized in the past.

In 2011, Juneau resigned from his seat on the Louisiana Gaming Control Board amid questions over his decision to help host a fundraiser for a political law enforcement candidate; that was against gaming board ethics rules.

Juneau's financial disclosure forms for the board from 2010, the last year available, show City Tele Coin being worth \$18 million. Juneau's personal income from the City Tele Coin totaled more than \$1.9 million that year.

The donations continued, including \$10,000 in 2015 to the campaign of Sheriff Doug Anderson in Ayoyelles Parish — a rural parish with a population of 41,000.

In Blount County, the Louisiana businessman personally has donated \$3,000 to Berrong's election campaigns, according to campaign financial reports going back to 2006. The first \$1,500 contribution was made in September 2013, roughly eight months before the primary election. The second was made in April 2017, a year before the 2018 primary, in which Berrong faced one of his deputies, Patrick England.

Although \$1,500 represents a small amount of Berrong's campaign coffers, it was exceeded in the last election by only local businessman Randy Massey and the Blount Lifestyle PAC, a political fund for Blount incumbents.

Blount County Attorney Garrett wrote to the newspaper that the contributions do not fall under the county's code of ethics, which prohibit a government official from accepting any money, gratuity or other consideration intended to influence the official's judgment or action.

"Obviously, Jerry Juneau is not the party with whom Blount County contracts, and he is not a contractor within the meaning of the County's Code of Ethics or the conflict of interest provision of the Request for Proposals," he wrote. Given that all bids are handled through the Blount County

Purchasing Department, he wrote, "neither (Berrong) or I feel that this is an ethical violation as described in our Code of Ethics."

But cultivating the good favor of sheriffs doesn't hurt in a competitive industry driven by personal recommendations.

"He wines and dines with the sheriffs, so he's got the business," says Foster Campbell, an elected Democrat on the Louisiana Public Service Commission. "I'm not saying it's illegal, but it stinks. It's immoral."

The commission, which regulates public utilities in the state, found in 2013 that City Tele Coin and other inmate-calling services were collecting millions of dollars in surcharge fees from inmate accounts even though those fees had not been approved by the Federal Communications Commission. The charges included an "administrative cost" of up to \$10 when opening a direct-pay account; a "processing cost" on direct-pay refunds of \$5; a "transfer fee" of up to \$2.50 to move balances on direct-pay accounts to a different phone number; and a monthly "inactivity fee" of up to \$10 for accounts with no activity in a six-month period.

While the commission's investigation was ongoing, Juneau hosted a fundraiser for the commission's chairman, Eric Skrmetta, at City Tele Coin's office. Additionally, Juneau and his wife gave Skrmetta's campaign \$10,000.

City Tele Coin then offered \$5,000 to settle the commission's case, and Skrmetta made a motion to discuss the matter in a closed session. Campbell says he had a conflict of interest.

The investigation of City Tele Coin ultimately was dismissed.

**A sheriff with a different view**

Juneau has contracted with Blount County in some form or another since the early 2000s, when he bought the company previously providing phone services at the Blount County jail, Berrong says.

"When he bought it, he did an audit," the sheriff said. "And Jerry Juneau found in the audit that the company had shorted the Blount County government \$140,000." Shortly after, he says Juneau flew to Blount County and worked out a deal to pay the money back.

"That showed me how honest he was," Berrong says.

Newspaper archives paint a



Photo by Tom Sherlin, The Daily Times, Maryville

**A CTC inmate phone vending deposit device at the Blount County jail.**

picture of Juneau as a shrewd, veteran businessman who knows how to use politics to push profits. As a convenience store owner in the 1970s, Juneau pushed to approve liquor sales on Sunday. As a gambling hall owner in the '90s, he pushed for the controversial approval of new "video bingo" machines, which critics said would shortchange charities that are intertwined with the industry there.

Juneau's entry into phone services for jail and prison inmates came in the early 2000s as a side venture for City Tele Coin, which by 2004 was still largely a pay phone provider.

Sheriff Victor Jones of Natchitoches Parish in Louisiana says he has called Juneau a "crook." City Tele Coin provided phone services for his local jail beginning in 2002, after it was subcontracted by another firm. After several years, Jones became suspicious.

"I can't recall exactly what triggered it," Jones said, "but it felt like something wasn't right." He says he wondered if the company was over-

charging the families of inmates.

Jones' department chose not to renew its contract with the parent company after several years, but before it ended, they requested financial and call records from City Tele Coin.

As detailed in the judgment rendered in a resulting lawsuit, City Tele Coin spent the better part of two years dodging the request — at one point supplying some records, but declining to say why they could not provide all.

"Juneau lied on the stand, and so did his son," Jones said. "It was obvious, and it was bad."

The sheriff's department filed a motion for contempt. At a hearing on the motion, City Tele Coin asserted "for the first time," the judgment states, that all call detail records are deleted or overwritten after 30 days.

"Nobody around here believed it," Jones said. "No one destroys their records every 30 days."

The court ordered City Tele Coin to pay attorney fees and costs to the department in the amount of \$34,285.

# Moving from routine to highly relevant: How to improve meeting coverage

This column is aimed at every single journalist working anywhere in the world now and in the future.

That's a big bill to fill, but with tips to improve coverage of any type of meeting, the following concepts apply both to a rookie reporter covering a town board for a small weekly paper and a grizzled veteran monitoring the U.S. Congress for a national news service.

We all cover meetings, and we can all always do better. Here are some tactics to improve meeting coverage.

• Do your homework. Advanced effort is critical. Get agendas and supporting documents well before the meeting begins. Read them. Do interviews with key players prior to the meeting. Gain an understanding of key points and positions prior to showing up.

• Cash in on cash. Watch for anything financial or fiduciary. Scour meeting materials for anything where money may be spent, collected or shifted. Don't forget consent agendas or routine departmental updates where interesting items may be hidden.

• Consider a preview story. On major topics, reporters can inform readers of context and potential con-



## BETTER WRITING WITH BART

BART PFANKUCH

sequences long before a discussion and vote. Don't forget to include time, date and place of the meeting.

• Know the key players. This is ultra-critical on a beat, but is useful even on a one-off assignment. Be sure to know the board members, the staffers who inform them and, if possible, the real people who will be affected by a vote. Be sure to have the cell numbers of all the regulars and make sure they know how interested you are in what they say and do. Always call to confirm unknowns.

• Don't cast off the curmudgeons. Hopefully, your coverage area is home to a do-gooder or gadfly who attends most meetings and testifies frequently. You can quote them sparingly, if ever, but you should know them, treat them with respect and listen to them. Most share your belief that

government needs to be monitored and challenged, and they often have inside information that may require skepticism but is always worth knowing.

• Establish authority through accuracy. The best beat reporters are known for being critical but fair and complete. Don't take sides, don't let your personal opinions be known (never, ever comment on social media!), and don't report any opinions you know to be false. Your reputation is sacred, so protect it. Once trusted, your access to people and information will improve.

• Don't forget to follow up. Meetings occur at a moment in time and therefore almost always present an incomplete, imperfect picture. If you're unsure of something, hold it back. You can, and should, frequently follow up by drilling in on divergent opinions, exploring issues in greater depth and reporting the impacts on populations or individual people.

• Pay attention, even if it hurts. Don't space out if the discussion wanes. Use your phone only to look up information or confirm data presented, not to text, email or Google random topics. Watch and listen for the little ideas or facts

that can blossom into important stories later.

• Listen closely to what is said, and what isn't. Watch for unspoken reactions by panel members or the public and approach them later for an explanation. Reporting on actions provides fodder for invigorated writing.

• Focus on real folks. Approach members of the public and ask why they are there. When someone testifies, get the correct spelling of their name, business or organization. Follow residents into the hallway to interview them or get their cell number and email address for contact or clarification later.

• Describe projects accurately. Always include clear indicators of where something will be built or altered (the northeast corner of X Avenue and Y Street). Provide project costs and the source of the money. Include names of people and businesses that receive government money. Publish project timelines and any promises. All these heighten accountability.

• Let length indicate importance. Don't write the same length story every time or give in to editor pressure to fill space. Some meetings result only in briefs. Try leading

with the top issue and provide bullet points on smaller topics in an "In Other Action" box.

• Seek out photos. When a person, place or thing is talked about, get a photo before or after the meeting. Shoot photos of attendees or panel members in action, even a head shot. Take an occasional crowd photo or picture of the panel as one. Even photos of documents can work.

• List votes and voters. On key issues, always provide readers with the vote tally and names of who voted how.

• Challenge closed session. When appropriate, which is almost always, stand up and ask for the legal reason an executive session is needed. Do this often, and they may hide less frequently.

• Treat meetings as opportunities. Only you can make meeting coverage valuable and interesting. If you get lazy, readers suffer. If you work hard, the public will benefit.

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## Google using others' news content for their product development

**SUBMITTED**  
**News Media Alliance**  
**October 1, 2019**

The American public consumes more news than ever, with more than 200 million unique visitors consuming digital news each month. However, the economics of that consumption will not sustain the investments needed for quality journalism. The news industry has seen revenues drop 54 percent since 2006, according to research from Pew. The rise of the tech platforms and their dominance of online content has played a major role in this trend.

Although many may claim that the two trends are unrelated and that the news industry has not adapted to digital distribution, a new study, containing analysis conducted by experts at strategy and economics consulting firm Keystone Strategy and written by the News Media Alliance, illustrates that the news industry's loss has been directly impacted by

Google's gain.

According to the study, news content has produced significant financial returns for Google:

• 39% of search results and 40% of clicks on trending queries are news content;

• 16% of results and clicks on the "most searched" queries are news results;

• In 2008, Google News generated about \$100 million to the company;

• Based on News Media Alliance members' traffic, news consumption on Google Search is at least six times larger than on Google News;

• Taken together, Google made an estimated \$4.7 billion in revenue from news content in 2018; this is a conservative estimate, with the actual number likely being considerably higher.

This estimate is conservative and the true value of news content is likely much higher for several reasons that are difficult or impossible to quantify. Not only is Google driving Search

with news, but the company is using news content for product development, such as training its artificial intelligence services, in order to keep users in the Google ecosystem. The additional uses of news content as drivers of engagement are also potentially serious drivers of data and revenue for the platform.

Most notably, AMP (accelerated mobile pages) and the addition of a "Breaking News" category on YouTube have made it possible for people to indulge in all the news content they want without ever going to a publisher's website. As a result, publishers are losing ad revenue, brand recognition and valuable data that could help them build stronger relationships with their readers. Google, on the other hand, is generating more traffic and user data that they can use to keep consumers in their ecosystem for even longer periods of time.

As with any business, in order

to survive, news publishers need to be able to make money from their own product, which can be reinvested in reporting. While information wants to be free, journalists need to get paid. This requires finding common rules for a fair and equitable online ecosystem that allows publishers to thrive and maintain the quality of their content that readers expect.

This is not only essential for the future of journalism, but helps ensure an informed democracy and civic society. Our local communities and public discourse rely on the availability of and access to high-quality news that keeps our decisionmakers accountable. News deserts are a growing concern, leaving many communities without access to local news. Local news publishers' health and sustainability – and that of our democracy – requires the platforms to acknowledge their role and to engage with publishers to create a more just digital marketplace.

## Free webinars for TPA members

**Nov. 21**  
**Using Digital and Social Media for Growing Readership and Revenue**

**Nov. 22**  
**Keeping Subscribers Happy**

Visit  
[www.OnlineMediaCampus.com](http://www.OnlineMediaCampus.com)  
to register for webinars.

Contact [rgentile@tnpress.com](mailto:rgentile@tnpress.com)  
for the coupon code.

300 archived webinars  
are available

# Traditional TV network stations skip reporting their own reduced numbers

**PETER W. WAGNER**  
N'West Iowa Review  
October 1, 2019

I'm amazed at how the traditional, over-the-air, television networks consistently report that "newspapers are dead." Their anchors report that story time and again, but never report their own losses in viewership.

The most recent example took place on the October 6, 2019, broadcast of CBS News Sunday Morning hosted by Jane Pauley.

I usually enjoy the Sunday morning's excellent reporting and off-the-wall feature stories. But I resent the network's obsession with condemning the future of the printed newspaper.

The specific comment on October 6 was part of a piece about a new HBO production honoring the importance of Jimmy Breslin and Pete Hamill in glory days of New York journalism. They were "deadline artists," the cross-network promotion story stated, "in a time when newspapers were still king."

But the negative comments didn't end there. In an attempt to hammer their point, the segment was introduced by Jane Pauley saying the "Newseum in Washington, DC, would be closing later this year as so many newspapers

had over the last decade."

"Over 1,800 newspapers have recently closed, merged or reduced the number of days they're printed," Pauley said.

She didn't add that Gannett Company, the national newspaper publishing chain which includes USA Today, has been known for providing much of the Newseum's funding, is entering a merger with Gatehouse Media. Gatehouse, which is reportedly assuming total management and the Gannett name, is known for running a much tighter financial operation.

But even more importantly, what Pauley didn't report, and the network never reports, is that network and cable viewership is also greatly reduced. Especially over-the-air network numbers.

An associate recently told me about a comment made by a relative who manages a network TV station in a major metro market.

"The total number of households watching the five network, over-the-air stations in his city," the station manager shared, "did not even total the equal time viewership any one of the stations had ten years ago."

More importantly, TV Guide, which should be a positive spokesperson boosting the television

industry, reported in its October 10 issue, that 2019's fall premiere week attracted a smaller audience than last year, as it has year after year for the last five years.

In 2015 the new season introduction week attracted 33.9 million viewers across America. In 2016 that number dropped to 29.9 million and in 2017 to 27.1 million.

This fall, only 22 million viewers bothered to turn on their television sets to catch the new season of over-the-air network programming. That's 12 million fewer viewers, or more than one-third fewer, than five years ago.

The networks are suffering a huge decline in their viewership and yet they continue to point a finger at print as being the only victim of one generation's dependency on social media.

There is a difference in television and print and a major reason so many community newspapers are continuing to do so well.

That reason is easily summed up in the word local! Locally owned and published community newspapers still have a solid connection with all that is local.

Television stations are forced by economics to plant themselves in major markets. Their broadcast news departments have to

cover huge geographic areas, sometimes crossing state lines, in their attempt to be all things to all viewers. That hit-and-miss reporting fails to create the loyalty and following desired and needed by small community and even many regional businesses.

Local papers, in contrast, are able to concentrate their coverage of their hometown and nearby rural area. They are both capable and committed to reporting the latest information about the town's school district, from the city manager's office and county courthouse, regarding the downtown business district and the local churches.

They are stories alive with personality. That includes details from the weekend's football games, the most recent meeting of the local Kiwanis club, a report of some honor given a local citizen and the upcoming events at the senior center.

Time and again I have watched the Main Streets of small towns without a newspaper disappear. Community newspapers, produced by families invested in the town's future, are that community's guarantee they will continue to exist and prosper.

Large town television stations have enough problems without using their time and energy taking

potshots at newspapers. According to recent national reports, younger Americans are disconnecting from cable and even their rooftop antenna at an alarming pace. Instead they are circumventing traditional broadcast distribution and turning to the many streaming services now being offered. Streaming services with no local news or consensus building local information.

Newspapers have a great future and an important story to tell about their permanence and readership. But to make sure the community knows and understands the facts, the entire staff from publisher to news staff to sales team need to get out on the street and tell it.

*Want more information and motivation to help you tell your publication's story? Experience more GET REAL straight talk from one of America's leading newspaper and shopper publishers and sales trainers. Ask your group to schedule one or more of Peter W Wagner's seminars on selling, producing and growing your community paper. Contact him at [pww@iowainformation.com](mailto:pww@iowainformation.com) or CELL 712-348-3550. Or contact Peter direct for proven sales training for your staff.*

# Gov. Lee decision raises questions about deliberative process exemption

In 2005, then-Gov. Phil Bredesen was planning a major scale-back to TennCare to, as he put it, "save" the program whose costs were rising exponentially.

A sit-in was staged at the Tennessee State Capitol over several days to protest, to no avail.

Karl Davidson, who was among the protesters, later alleged in a lawsuit that he and others at the sit-in were willfully and maliciously harassed and intimidated by various state officials and highway patrol officers in retaliation for exercising a protected First Amendment right. Further, he said this harassment was done at the direction or at least knowledge of the governor and deputy governor.

His claims of constitutional violations ultimately failed, but it was within this case that a potentially troubling court precedent was



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DEBORAH FISHER

established regarding the deliberative process privilege.

## Development of deliberative process privilege

During the case, Davidson asked for a series of documents, mostly notes from meetings and telephone conversations among the governor's legal counsel and with the attorney general's office, and notes and edits by the attorneys on a document concerning the use of public areas around the State Capitol.

The Court of Appeals in an opinion authored by Judge Richard Dinkins ruled that the deliberative process privilege protected the documents sought by Davidson and he could not get them. (Davidson v. Bredesen, 2013). The Court of Appeals had said "there is a 'valid need' that the advice high governmental officials receive be protected from disclosure."

"The officials who are able to claim the privilege are those vested with the responsibility of developing and implementing law and public policy, many times requiring that differing and various interests and viewpoints be considered. In this context, the privilege recognizes the official's relationship with trusted advisors as a relationship which is fundamental to the process of deliberating toward the result and which is

sufficiently important to justify a limitation on the 'need to develop all relevant facts in the adversary system [which] is both fundamental and comprehensive.' "

The court had concluded that the "deliberative process privilege" outweighed Davidson's rights of get the information in the court case.

Open government advocates were alarmed at the decision to use the "deliberative process privilege" to shield the documents. Attorney-client privilege or work product protection could have been sufficient for at least some of the documents. And they worried that the court's broadly worded ruling could spur public officials to begin claiming confidentiality of documents and reports that traditionally have been considered public record.

"It is no stretch of the imagination to envision a city or county

mayor refusing to release a traffic study about a dangerous intersection or a negative feasibility study about a pet public project, claiming that the documents were used to formulate policy," wrote the Knoxville News Sentinel in an editorial.

## Gov. Lee refuses to release department recommendations

This week (in early September), The Tennessean reported that Gov. Bill Lee's administration is refusing to release recommendations of the departments in the executive branch for improving their services to rural Tennesseans.

Lee had requested the recommendations in his very first

# Here are 25 on-the-job ideals to practice in the workplace

After more than 30 years as the Director of Henninger Consulting, the time has come for me to shift my attention to Julia, family, grandkids and guitar. I'm not the "retiring type," but I will become so at the end of this year. I'm looking forward to that.

For the past few months, I've reprised some of my best columns from years past.

This one focuses on how we think about our work . . . and ourselves.

For the past half-century, I've been a consultant, and editor and a writer.

During those 50 years, I've learned a few things about how to do my work well and how to conduct myself in the workplace.

I recently received a call from someone close to me who was struggling in her work. She asked my advice, and I did my best to help her.

After our conversation, I sent her the following. I call it "25 on-the-job ideals."



**BY  
DESIGN**

ED HENNINGER

Here's the list:

1. Be yourself. Everyone else is taken.
2. Be a leader.
3. Serve the company.
4. Bring solutions (not problems) to the table.
5. Be the "go to" person.
6. Always say "yes." You can backpedal later.
7. Promise low, deliver high.
8. Share your time freely . . . when you can.
9. Demand respect.
10. Face opposition firmly . . . but gracefully.
11. Be professional in everything you do.

12. Control the things you can control. Let go of the things you can't.
13. Be responsible.
14. Be accountable.
15. Take the high road.
16. Admit your mistakes . . . and learn from them.
17. Never claim credit for yourself. Those who matter will know.
18. Lower your expectations of others. Foolish and lazy people aren't worth the space you give them (rent free!) in your head.
19. With rare exceptions, you'll never be able to change what someone thinks about you. It's usually not worth the effort.
20. Get a mentor—someone you can talk to.
21. Be a mentor—someone needs your help.
22. Leave 'em laughing.
23. Leave 'em wanting more of you.
24. Never think of it as "just a job." It's more than that to the people who matter.
25. Remember: it's "just a job."



**Ed's advice #22: Leave 'em laughing**

Metro Creative Graphics

Never let your work define who you are as a person.

I've tried to live by these ideals during my entire career. There's been an occasional slip here and

there, but following these principles sure has made my professional life easier, more productive — and more fun. Give these some thought. I'll bet they can help you, too!

## FISHER from Page 9

executive order, in which he also asked for assessments of each department's activities and impact in rural communities. The governor's office released the assessments, but cited the deliberative process privilege in refusing a public records request for the recommendations.

The governor's spokeswoman Laine Arnold explained that the recommendations are not established policies of the administration.

"Drawing conclusions about policy ideas from an incomplete document at a single department would be like calling the ballgame after watching only one team in warm-ups," she told *The Tennessean*. In Davidson, the court had concluded that the "deliberative process privilege" trumped Davidson's rights to information that he thought could help prove his court case.

An earlier Court of Appeals in *Swift v. Campbell* (2004) had also recognized deliberate process privilege, but declined to apply it to an assistant district attorney general. The court expressed caution:

"Protecting the confidentiality of conversations and deliberations among high government officials ensures frank and open

discussion and, therefore, more efficient government operations. . . . However, the deliberative process privilege must be applied cautiously because it could become the exception that swallows up the rule favoring governmental openness and accountability. If governmental employees at any level could claim the privilege, Tennessee's public records statutes and open meetings law would become little more than empty shells.

"Whether the 'deliberative process privilege' may be invoked depends on the governmental official or officials involved. We have no doubt, for example, that the Governor may properly invoke this privilege, should he or she care to, in meetings with staff or cabinet members. We have also held that the Constitution of Tennessee embodies a version of the privilege for the General Assembly when it decides to invoke it."

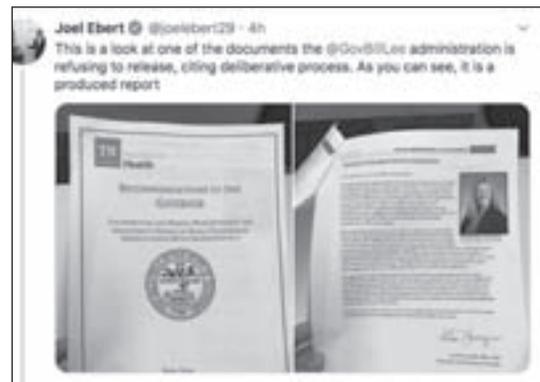
### Should agency recommendations be exempt?

Whether or not written recommendations by state agencies to the governor's office about improving state services in rural areas are exempt from disclosure under the Ten-

nessee Public Records Act is a legal question. Whether such recommendations should be exempt from the public records act is a question worth all of our reflection in light of the law "favoring governmental openness and accountability."

Would any report with a recommendation to the governor, prepared by a government agency, or its commissioner, be confidential? Do such recommendations only become public when and if the recommendations are incorporated into the governor's own plan? Would members of the General Assembly have access to the recommendations of state agencies, regardless of whether they were adopted by the governor as his policy?

Are the reports the products of the commissioners personally, or of the agencies they oversee —



Submitted by TCOG

Via social media, Tennessean reporter Joel Ebert shows one of the state agency's recommendations he obtained on improving rural services despite refusal by the governor's office to release 22 state agency recommendations, citing the deliberative process privilege. Ebert does not say how he obtained the report.

agencies that traditionally produce reports and recommendations that are public? Do the written recommendations in response to an Executive Order fall into the category of communications with the governor that must be kept confidential to ensure "frank and open discussion"?

Does keeping such recommendations under wraps serve

the purpose of better informing Tennesseans of the debates and policy issues that must be decided by their representatives?

And finally, would commissioners who authored or signed off on the recommendations be prohibited from sharing their thoughts with the public at large? Is it the sort of sensitive advice that needs to be confidential?

The Tennessean obtained the Department of Health's recommendations, but didn't say how they got the report. The 21 other recommendation reports appear to remain under wraps, unless others are leaked to the press.

The government policies addressing problems in rural parts of the state is of interest to a number of citizens.

If one believes in the marketplace of ideas, as I do, making public policy recommendations from state agencies on issues as broadly important as rural improvement can only strengthen the end result.

*Deborah Fisher is the executive director of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (TCOG). This blog was originally posted on the TCOG website Sept. 6, 2019.*

## OBITUARIES

### Terry Goins

Longtime Herald-News, Dayton, sports editor and writer and Rhea County sports aficionado Terry Goins passed away on Thursday, Oct. 10, after a battle with leukemia.

Goins served as a sports writer and sports editor at The Herald-News from 1980 to 2000. He returned to The Herald-News in August 2014 and covered Rhea County High School football games until October 2018.

The Herald-News Publisher Sara Jane Locke said that she has known Goins nearly all her life and praised not only his ability as a writer and editor but his love for the Rhea County community.

"I lost a lifelong friend on Thursday. We were classmates from first grade through our senior year of high school and in the mid-80s we worked together at The Herald-News," Locke said. "I can honestly say that our friendship has lasted a lifetime, and I am so very blessed to call Terry my good friend."



Goins

"It has been a pleasure connecting with him again since I came back home to take the job as publisher of The Herald-News in 2008. He was one of the first people that contacted

me and wished me well. And later on we were fortunate that he came back to us to cover sports, and boy, was he back in his element, covering and writing sports again.

Kim Cooley also worked with Goins at The Herald-News and said that community was blessed to have such a devoted sports writer and fan covering area sports.

"Terry was the most passionate, devoted writer I've ever worked with. He wasn't just a reporter; he befriended our young athletes and their families. He became a part of every team he covered," Cooley said. "Nobody realizes the time and energy reporters put into their craft,

especially sports writers who often have several games in one evening.

"On a personal note, I spent many years in the editorial department at The Herald-News sitting next to Terry. I learned a lot about being a reporter from him. And in the process, we became good friends. He was 'Uncle Terry' to my boys. Every Christmas Eve, he would call around 7:30 p.m. and we would spend 15 to 20 minutes exchanging quotes from 'A Christmas Story,' one of his favorite movies. It was a holiday tradition for us. Terry truly believed in his heart that he would beat this illness. I knew the odds weren't in his favor, but he never worried much about odds."

Dave Keylon, a sports reporter for Channel 9 in Chattanooga and longtime participant in The Herald-News Pick Em' Panel, said that he considered Goins a mentor and that he will be missed.

"T.G. was always like a fun uncle. He was such a great mentor, and more importantly, he was a great friend," Keylon said. "He's

one of the many influences I've had in my life that have steered me into what I'm doing today."

Rhea County School Board Chair John Mincy said that Goins had an unwavering commitment to Rhea County schools.

"He will be truly missed by many in the community and in our schools," Mincy said.

*The Herald-News, Dayton  
Oct. 11, 2019*



Sengstacke

died peacefully at their home in Bristol, Penn. She was 67.

Mrs. Sengstacke's contributions to the newspaper's growth can be found in the Defender's archives

and remembered by the people who knew her well.

"She was fearless," said her sister-in-law Ethel Sengstacke, who once worked at the Defender as a photographer. "She researched her stories and was fair and balanced. She sought the truth."

Judy Seals Togbo, who was the advertising manager for the newspaper, said Mrs. Sengstacke was a hard worker who took her work seriously.

"She was smart and investigated each story to get to the truth," Togbo said.

*Tri-State Defender, Memphis  
Sept. 12, 2019*

### Linda Taylor Sengstacke

The name Linda Taylor Sengstacke was synonymous with the Black Press in the 1970s and '80s. She was the editor-in-chief of the Tri-State Defender during that time and followed the tradition of attacking issues head-on without fear or favor, an approach to journalism that was encouraged by her uncle-in-law, Mr. John H. Sengstacke, who founded the Defender in 1951.

Mrs. Sengstacke was married to Mr. Sengstacke's nephew, Herman Fredrick Sengstacke. On Sept. 9, she

## AP's Walker first female sports writer selected for TSWA Hall of Fame

**SUBMITTED  
TN Sports Writers Association  
October 17, 2019**

The Tennessee Sports Writers Association announced its newest members of the TSWA Hall of Fame on Thursday, Oct. 17, including Tommy Bryan (Lebanon), Teresa Walker (Associated Press) and Mark Wiedmer (Chattanooga). The three individuals will be inducted into the Hall of Fame on July 9, 2020, at Cumberland University.

### Tommy Bryan – Lebanon

A 43-year veteran of the newspaper industry and founding member of the TSWA, Bryan is a 1975 graduate of Lebanon High School. He graduated from then Cumberland Junior College in 1977 and worked in sports information at Cumberland, Austin Peay, Middle Tennessee and Trevecca Nazarene. Bryan started writing for the Lebanon Democrat in 1977 as a sports writer until switching to news beat writer in 1979. He became owner and publisher of The Wilson World newspaper in 1981 through 2003, overseeing daily operations, front



Bryan

page design while also working as sports writer and news editor. He hosted numerous sports talk shows on WANT-FM and has served as master of ceremonies at athletic-related events for 40 years. He has been the voice of the Lebanon High Blue Devils for more than 33 years and Cumberland football for more than 10 years. He's also responsible for online content and social media outlets for Main Street Sports, a group of eight weekly newspapers, for the past six years. A founding member of the Lebanon-Wilson County Sports Council, Bryan was inducted into Cumberland's Sports Hall of Fame in 1990.

### Teresa Walker – The Associated Press

A native of Homestead, Fla., Walker is a two-time Tennessee Sportswriter of the Year and won an APSE for feature writing in



Walker

2015 for a story from the Masters. A graduate of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville in June 1987, she went to work as a news reporter for The Daily Times in

Maryville. She covered one high school football game and wrote one sports column and a feature on Hoosier racing tires while mostly covering education, courts and the police beat. Hired by the Associated Press in Nashville in December 1989, Walker wrote college football and basketball games from around Tennessee by phone for the first two years. She became Tennessee sports editor in June 1992 and has covered five Olympics, three Super Bowls, a handful of Southeastern Conference men's and women's basketball tournaments, several NCAA Tournaments and regional finals and the 2014 Women's Final Four in Nashville. She covered the relocation of the NFL's Houston

Oilers between 1995 and 1997, taking over as beat writer upon the team's arrival in Nashville in July 1997. Walker became one of the AP's Pro Football Writers helping cover the NFL in 2014 and is the first president of the Pro Football Writers Association's Nashville chapter. She also is a past president of the TSWA. She has covered the NHL's Nashville Predators, including the 2017 Stanley Cup Final; Vanderbilt football, men's and women's basketball and baseball; the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies and the Memphis Tigers.

Walker becomes the first female sports writer selected for the TSWA Hall of Fame and only the third female elected by the association. The other two, June Stewart and Debby Jennings, are both from the sports information field.

### Mark Wiedmer – Chattanooga Times Free Press

A native of Hopkinsville, Ky., Wiedmer has spent 35 years at the Times-Free Press after starting



Wiedmer

as a graphic artist. He was so poor on his first day at the paper, Valentine's Day of 1983, he borrowed money from his new boss to buy his wife a Valentine gift. Wiedmer

transitioned to writing after filling in for a co-worker who became sick while covering a district baseball tournament. Within two years, Wiedmer took over the UT-Chattanooga basketball beat and has been a columnist since 1987. Over that time, Wiedmer has been a two-time TSWA Sports Writer of the Year, won several Green Eyeshade Awards, a few Football Writers Association honors and totaled more than 75 total writing awards. He covered 28 straight Final Fours between 1988 and 2015, as well as two Super Bowls, six Masters, 14 Kentucky Derbies, one Olympics, two U.S. Opens and two PGA championships. He's also covered 31 Area 4 Special Olympics in Chattanooga.

## TPA GENERATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING WORKSHOPS, OCT. 8-11



Photo by Robyn Gentile, TPA

Above: Chuck Underwood (right), *The Generational Imperative*, was the keynote presenter for four workshops on Generational Strategies for Editorial and Advertising staffs that were held in each of four locales - Jackson, Nashville, Chattanooga, and Morristown - from Oct. 8-11. Here, Underwood meets with two editorial staffers from the Chattanooga Times Free Press, outdoors reporter Mark Pace and health care reporter Elizabeth Fite during a workshop held Oct. 10 at the Times Free Press. The four workshops were sponsored by the TPA and the TPA Foundation.



Photo by Victor Parkins, The Mirror-Exchange, Milan

The Jackson workshops were held on the campus of Jackson State University. Chuck Underwood talked about the effects of the Recession, which was one reason some Millennials didn't have summer jobs during high school — those jobs were being taken by adults whose jobs were impacted during the recession.



Photo by Robyn Gentile, TPA

Above: Nichole Heck (left), *Grainger Today*, *Bean Station*, and Teri Manning, *Citizen Tribune*, Morristown, were among the attendees at the Oct. 11 Generational Strategies advertising workshop held in Morristown.



Photos by Robyn Gentile, TPA

Left photo: R. Jack Fishman, *Citizen Tribune/Lakeway Publishers*, explains why Generational Strategies are important for newspapers before he introduces Chuck Underwood at the Oct. 11 advertising session in Morristown. Right photo: Attendees listen in at the Oct. 10 editorial session at the Chattanooga Times Free Press.



### KEYSTONE from Page 1

in increasingly alarming numbers. That much is now obvious.

Not yet quite so obvious has been the slow but relentless disruption of community, and of the delicate, but critical, balance of power that a well-informed and engaged public can exert over its increasingly unaccountable and unresponsive government.

In February 2019, *The Atlantic* published an article by John Temple, the editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* when it folded in 2009. "The worst is still to come," he wrote. "A decade later, I'm con-

cerned that more local journalism will suffer the same fate."

Temple's greatest concern, though, was for the health of our communities. He cited studies that have measured the cost of corruption when a local newspaper dies, and the direct correlation of declining news coverage to lower voter turnout. "People need independent, reliable, fact-based reporting to help them make good decisions," he wrote. "Democracy can't function without it."

In a similar vein, Dan Kennedy, an associate professor of journalism at Boston's Northeastern University, wrote, "There's no doubt

that government officials—especially those who are corrupt — fear the scrutiny of tough, independent journalism."

In constructing a government of checks and balances, it was no accident that our founding fathers added ten amendments to the Constitution — the first of those, intended to ensure a free press. And it is no accident, nor is it historically unprecedented, that a government challenged by that free press will proclaim it fake news, and will attack and encourage attacks on both journalists and the institutions that sustain journalism.

In this slow-moving ecological

disaster — as newspapers die and this country's news deserts grow — it is the relationship of one organism to another, and to our physical surroundings that is eroding. Local community newspapers are the keystone species — the best way, on the most intimate and immediate scale, to make democracy work.

Decades after the wolf disappeared from Yellowstone, when the full impact of its absence became apparent, the wolf was reintroduced back into its native range. Other wildlife gradually returned, as did the willow and wetlands. Over-grazed grasses grew again, and the prairie flourished.

"To keep every cog and wheel is the first rule of intelligent tinkering," wrote conservationist and philosopher Aldo Leopold. The return of wolves to the Yellowstone ecosystem restored a missing cog, integral to its landscape.

Newspapers are worth fighting for, worth saving, and well worth sustaining and investing in. We need not wait decades to know what their demise will do to our landscape, to our communities, and to our democracy. We can see it now.

*Texas Press Association President Laurie Ezzell-Brown is editor and publisher of The Canadian Record.*